



David Olney **"Border Crossing"** CoraZong Records

"Border Crossing" has only ever been released on European record labels. It first appeared in 1992 on the now defunct Dutch imprint, SilenZ. Relative to that version, this 21st century edition has been enhanced by two *in-concert* tracks cut at the Club Paradiso in Amsterdam during 1992. We'll return to them later. During the nineteen-nineties, Olney issued a quartet of European only albums, although three of them, including **"Border Crossing,"** were cut in Nashville recording studios. The other titles were **"Top To Bottom"** [Italy], **"Ache Of Longing"** [Germany] and **"Live In Holland"** [Holland].

The thirteen tracks on the original version of **"Border Crossing"** included new studio renditions of three Olney's songs that appeared on his early career recordings. The opening cut "Running From Love" is one of those, having been included on the limited edition vinyl release **"Customized"** [1984] which also featured David's early career band, the X-Rays. As for content, the song title is self-explanatory and here, Olney delivers a throaty rendition. A chug-a-lug bass line underpins "Blue Days, Black Nights," a tale of lost love and the *dark shades* of misery that ensue for one of the protagonists. "Message To Garcia" is drawn from Olney's *Jose Ortega Saga*, a themed suite of six songs that have never been released on an official recording. In the later title Ortega escapes from Garcia's custody, aided by Garcia's wife – *"She'll forsake a king, And die for a bandit."* As for the gist of the "Message To Garcia" Ortega maintains that when they next meet face-to-face, *"one of us must die."*

The bluesy "Little Bit Of Poison" is a song Olney revisited on his most recent Rounder/Philo disc **"Through A Glass Darkly"** [1999], and it was also covered by Denise Franke on **"Comfort"** [2001]. With the money counted there's a shortfall, so the narrator shoots dead his accomplice in crime in the up-tempo "Wait Here For The Cops." A smoking gun in one hand, the narrator concludes, *"When the running starts, It never stops."* This song previously appeared on Olney's debut recording with the X-Rays **"Contender"** [1981]. Requited love and unrequited love are the reference points in "Two Kinds Of Love." By way of proving that David Olney is one of America's finest song poets, the Tex-Mex flavoured "Sister Angelina" finds his muse in full flow. Set at the Sonora Mission, when the narrator arrives there he is extremely ill. Tended almost constantly by Angelina, he recovers but in the process falls hopelessly in love with her – *"She took the fever from my brain, And she placed it in my heart."* As the song closes, the narrator reflects on the fact that in the morning he will be leaving, on his own.

"Theresa Maria" is a song of parting wherein the narrator, for whom *"The highway is calling,"* muses about his lover, and whether, in the coming years, *"Will you still want me."* The song first appeared on David's 1986 Rounder/Philo collection **"Eye of The Storm."** The opening verse of "Latin Lover" features *"The Italian beauty, With her Italian eyes"* who secretly harbours a broken heart, while in the second verse *"With Italian eyes, The Portuguese beauty, With jet black hair"* waits by the shore for the return of her lover. Set in Barcelona, the final verse finds the night-time dreams of a Latin lover haunted by *"Two beauties."* Marvin Watts harmonica, Stephanie Davis' fiddle and Olney's acoustic guitar converge in the up-tempo blues work out "I Love My Wife Blues," a song penned by one time X-Ray, Tommy Goldsmith [#].

The ballad "What Would I Do Without Your Love" showcases a gently picked acoustic guitar and Davis' understated fiddle work, while the five-minute long *movie/song* "Barcelona" possesses a Tex-Mex rhythm number. Hot blooded Latin passions abound in the latter title, as the narrator waits in the shadows for Guillermo *"that peacock,"* who has stolen his *"woman Consuela."* Eventually facing one another, knives

drawn, it's the narrator who falls mortally wounded. Suffice to say, the story doesn't end there, and I'm not going to spoil the ending by revealing what happens. Having recently passed, "Old John" focuses upon events at his wake, as the priest enquires "*who will speak for Old John.*" While no human voice replies, poetically *the natural world* – insects, birds and the elements - more than make up for the silence. Tellingly, Olney delivers the latter song *a cappella*. Rather than being previously unreleased material, the bonus *live* cuts amount to an acoustic guitar/voice reading of "Love's Been Linked To The Blues" from Olney's 1991 Rounder/Philo outing "**Roses**," plus "Deeper Well" the title cut of his 1988 Rounder/Philo album.

It's great to see "**Border Crossing**" back in print.

Note.

[#] – These days, Goldsmith is deputy managing editor of Nashville's, The Tennessean.

Folkwax Rating 8 out of 10

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 01/04